

Testimony of Lisamay Cleary-Cast  
Appropriations Sub-Committee Public Hearing February 18, 2017

Fully Fund CT's Independent Living Centers back to 528,680.

I am proud to say I am part of the staff at one of the Independent Living Centers in Connecticut. Our approach as an Agency is based on two fundamental principles: to ensure equal access and equal opportunity and to empower people with all types of physical and mental health disabilities. This approach helps people to achieve greater independence so that they can lead fuller and more satisfying lives. I am both a Transition Coordinator and an Independent Living Advocate.

As a Transition Coordinator for the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, I assist consumers in skilled nursing facilities and other institutions to return to life in the community with services and supports to live safe, successful, and fulfilling lives in the community of their choice. "Choice" being the key word. I have assisted people who have lived in nursing homes or institutions from as little as three months to as long as 30+ years. To assist and watch them on their journey as they transition into the community makes me feel proud to be working for a CIL.

Last year, CIL's transitioned 233 people with disabilities from nursing homes and institutions to community living, saving the state approximately 10.3 million dollars. In addition, CIL's have prevented 422 individuals from entering nursing facilities saving an estimated minimum of 1 million.

As an Independent Living Advocate I work one-to-one with those who are working on goals to lead more independent lives. These goals can take on many different forms to meet the individuals' unique needs reaching towards the ultimate goal of individual self-advocacy with limited ongoing support and guidance.

By eliminating CIL's thousands of people with physical and mental health disabilities will be unable to receive vital support and advocacy services.

Last year CT's centers for Independent Living provided:

2533 people with disabilities with independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, youth and educational services, along with other support services and over 17,000 contacts to provide disability related information and referral services.

Please don't eliminate funding for Centers for Independent Living.

Submitted by:

Lisamay Cleary-Cast

Southbury, Ct

Transition Coordinator

Independent Living Advocate

Independence Northwest